

11-27-1990

11/27/1990 - Practical application

University Marketing and Communications

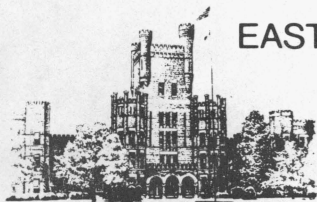
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

CHARLESTON, IL.--Information shared by a long-time botany professor at Eastern Illinois University about a poisonous plant growing in the open, upland woods of Illinois may help prevent the death of horses and other grazing animals in the area.

John Ebinger of Charleston teaches an off-campus class through Eastern's School of Adult and Continuing Education on "Plants and Civilization."

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EBINGER

Recently he learned that a former student in the Danville area put some of her classroom knowledge to practical use. After two horses in the Danville area died, the student recalled that Ebinger had told the class that the "White Snakeroot" plant could poison animals.

Although it usually dies after a heavy frost, this fall's mild weather has facilitated its growth.

"White Snakeroot, a white-flowered plant that grows two to three feet tall, contains an alcohol-type compound that is poisonous when eaten," Ebinger said.

"Usually animals aren't attracted to this plant. It is only when other food sources are scarce (i.e. other plants already dead) that they eat it. The plant tends to kill horses, but cattle normally don't die. However, the plant does cause their milk to be contaminated," he added.

In fact, Ebinger says, it was from "milk fever," possibly caused by the White Snakeroot, that Abraham Lincoln's mother died.